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**Provisional summary record of the 18th meeting (Chamber B)**
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 1 July 2010, at 3 p.m.

*President:* Mr. Soborun (Vice-President) ..... (Mauritius)

## Contents

Thematic discussion: Current global and national trends and challenges and their impact on gender equality and empowerment of women

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*In the absence of Mr. Ali (Malaysia), Mr. Soborun (Mauritius), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

*The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.*

**Thematic discussion: Current global and national trends and challenges and their impact on gender equality and empowerment of women**

1. **Mr. Wenaweser** (Liechtenstein) said that gender equality and women's empowerment were crucial to achieving all the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Yet women still faced violence and inequality, and strong action by the international community was needed to ensure their access to health services, political representation, employment and property.

2. His Government looked forward to the establishment of UN Women, the new Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, as well as the Organization's multiple initiatives aimed at eliminating violence against women. States had an obligation to protect women and girls from violence, hold perpetrators accountable and provide justice to victims. Continued impunity implicitly condoned violence against women as inevitable and acceptable. While the national and international legislation on the issue was progressing, it must be implemented in all parts of the world in order to make a real difference.

3. Ten years after the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), on women's involvement in peace and security, their participation in formal peace processes was still a distant goal, while sexual violence had increased at an alarming rate in conflict settings. He called on States to intensify efforts to implement mandates, particularly in the judiciary, in order to strengthen women's role in peace and security issues.

4. In regard to education, he drew attention to the social benefits of educating women, including a decline in maternal and infant mortality, improved health, greater work productivity and higher social and economic status. While women's and girls' access to education had increased globally, progress continued to be hampered by their disproportionate share of household responsibilities. His Government called on States to strengthen policies and programmes to address inequality in access to education in order to enhance women's employability.

5. While his delegation found that the draft ministerial declaration lacked strong language on promoting women's participation in the peace and security agenda as well as on the need to fight impunity for violence against women, it supported the compromise document and looked forward to its adoption.

6. **Mr. Li** Baodong (China) said that fifteen years after the Beijing World Conference on Women, which had greatly increased awareness of the need for women's equality, progress was evident around the world, particularly in terms of favourable legislation, access to education for girls and the eradication of violence against women. However, comprehensive gender equality and women's empowerment were still a distant goal in view of continuing gender stereotyping and women's low level of social and political participation, compounded with the new challenges in terms of employment and education generated by the international financial crisis.

7. The Chinese Government supported the United Nations role in advancing women's equality and would continue to provide political and financial support. His delegation believed that UN Women, the new gender body, would optimize the functions of existing entities, improve efficiency, increase input on projects in developing countries and promote implementation of international commitments.

8. As home to one fifth of the world's women, China had made great efforts to promote gender equality and provide new opportunities for women's development. Those included women's preferential access to microcredit, which had helped over 100,000 women start their own businesses. The Government had also been working to eliminate school fees in order to increase access to basic education, and by 2009 had succeeded in eliminating gender disparity in primary schools. School enrolment for girls, at over 99 per cent, had slightly surpassed that for boys. Health care for women had also been improving. In terms of political participation, gender equality had been integrated into legislation, and local and regional governments had been encouraged to create a legal framework on domestic violence and provide legal assistance to women. However, ensuring women's development and well-being remained a long-term task, as about 150 million people in China, half of them women, were still surviving on less than one dollar per day.

9. The Government, considering that women were a major force in human development and crucial to the goal of peace, welcomed cooperation with other States to adopt more effective measures to realize the goals of gender equality and women's empowerment.

10. **Mr. Sangqu** (Observer for South Africa) said that, despite the various international initiatives in support of gender equality, women still lacked access to credit, health services and education. They also remained vulnerable to exploitation, violence, rape and trafficking. While his delegation supported the call to increase women's access to financial services, technology, land and energy, such efforts must be complemented at the international level. In the same vein, while national microcredit and work programmes for women should be expanded, women's full participation in the global context depended on reduction of agricultural subsidies, removal of tariff protections in developed countries and renewed negotiations on the Doha Development Agenda.

11. His delegation welcomed the establishment of the new gender body, UN Women, as an indicator of the priority accorded to women's quality of life by the international community. The new agency would champion women's needs and advance gender mainstreaming within the United Nations and throughout country programmes. South Africa viewed gender equality to be at the core of all the MDGs. It was also committed to eradicating violence against women.

12. His delegation was concerned about the absence of women from formal peace processes. Their priorities were continually overlooked in peace agreements and post-conflict legal reform. The tenth anniversary of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) offered an opportunity to examine ways to enhance women's participation, including as mediators in conflict resolution, peacebuilding and post-conflict development. Good practices for increasing women's representation in peacebuilding bodies at all levels should be more widely disseminated.

13. South Africa had established a Ministry for Women, Children and People with Disabilities. The Government had also introduced legislation to address gender discrimination and was working to ensure women's involvement in policymaking. The socio-economic empowerment of rural women was a particular priority. South Africa had hosted the Fourth World Conference of Rural Women in 2007 and subscribed to its outcome Declaration, which recognized rural women as the poorest of the poor and called for their voices to be heard. In the area of political participation, South Africa sought to achieve gender parity in decision-making. His delegation looked forward to the adoption of the annual ministerial declaration and welcomed efforts to implement the internationally agreed commitments on gender equality and the empowerment of women.

14. **Mr. Al-Nafisee** (Saudi Arabia) said that the five-year deadline for meeting the MDGs should inspire greater efforts from the international community. His Government was concerned about the economic and social difficulties faced by developing countries and was committed to eradicating extreme poverty. Saudi Arabia had demonstrated support for the Goals by increasing its budget for social development and education and health programmes by over half. It had also been a leader among nations in the provision of timely support in response to natural disasters.

15. The Council played an essential role in fulfilling the Goals, and could also contribute to the global dialogue on financing mechanisms. Saudi Arabia sought to increase women's participation in economic activities by promoting appropriate policies and creating the mechanisms to implement them. It had adopted a range of measures to increase and diversify women's employment opportunities.

16. As a donor country and major partner in international development, Saudi Arabia considered foreign aid essential. Its assistance to developing countries, totalling billions of dollars, included respect for their national culture as an essential element for success. Reform of the international financial, monetary and trade systems should be achieved through existing institutions, emphasizing transparency in financial transactions. A global economic system must be built on a new partnership between developed and developing countries, founded on equality and mutual benefits and responsibilities, with greater access by developing countries to the markets of developed countries.

17. **Mr. Wittig** (Germany) said that women's participation was inextricably linked to achieving the internationally agreed development goals. Societies that did not respect women's rights were prone to instability and insecurity. The Government regarded

gender equality as a cornerstone of all of its policies, based on the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Beijing Platform for Action. Germany had supported women's political and economic empowerment internationally through its financial contribution to the World Bank's Gender Action Plan. The Government's action plan on gender was focused on women's role in conflict management, the economic empowerment of women, gender-specific responses to climate change and sexual and reproductive health and rights. Its approach recognized women as agents of change and crucial participants in the formal labour force and in political decision-making. It also supported women's organizations as playing a vital role in achieving gender equality. Assistance to partner countries included projects to enhance women's access to the justice system in Nigeria; to assist women living with HIV/AIDS in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; and to address violence against women in several Latin American countries.

18. His delegation placed great hopes on the new United Nations gender entity. The consolidated body would give women a stronger voice worldwide and make policies on equality more effective. Strong leadership would be critical to the success of the new agency. The momentum fostered during the past months in support of women's participation had the potential to place the achievement of the MDGs within reach.

19. **Mr. Dapkiunas** (Observer for Belarus) said that his country was ahead of schedule in fulfilling several of the Goals, made possible by the high level of funding for social protection, education and health care. There was equal access to all levels of education and over half of all women had completed higher education or vocational secondary education. Belarus was pleased to have fulfilled the target for the participation of women in decision-making.

20. Reducing unemployment among women was of strategic importance. Jobs were reserved for women who could not compete on an equal footing, and self-employment and entrepreneurship were encouraged. The proportion of women among the unemployed was steadily decreasing, as was the average amount of time spent unemployed. Labour laws protected the reproductive role of women by providing a three-year child-care leave that could be taken by any family member.

21. Belarus took part in the Secretary-General's global campaign to end violence against women and supported the proposed national database in that regard. Belarus had supported the creation of a unified gender entity and hoped it would meet the expectations of women. Belarus believed in the need to expand opportunities for women, shed gender stereotypes and create favourable conditions for their participation in decision-making. Belarus supported the growing recognition of the link between the role of women in decision-making and the effectiveness of policies being carried out, and believed that the absence of women from leadership positions resulted in less attention being accorded to the gender issue and in women's rights being ignored.

22. **Ms. Flores** (Observer for Honduras) said that her delegation strongly supported the President's call for an action-oriented, concise ministerial declaration that favoured women's social and political empowerment. The varying results of national initiatives demonstrated the need to consider the political, cultural and religious characteristics of countries when designing international cooperation programmes.

23. Despite the many international initiatives for poverty reduction, the enormous and urgent need exceeded the limited resources. The impacts of the financial crisis extended far beyond the countries that had caused it, negating any benefit international cooperation provided. The existing aid was fragmentary, assistance programmes had dwindled and targets for official development assistance had never been met. Exacerbating that situation was the developing countries' heightened vulnerability to natural disasters and climate change.

24. Women played a substantial role in Honduran society as both agents of change and as a potential economic resource. Legislation protected women, indigenous populations, children and families and a range of public agencies defended those groups' human rights and promoted their political participation and development.

25. She called attention to the vast differences in opportunities available to women in her country, contrasting the life of rural women, subject to backbreaking work and endless childrearing, to that of women in urban centres, who benefited from education and technology. That great inequality was comparable to the differences between rich and poor countries, with some people living in overabundance and others

barely able to survive. She wondered how the economic interests of globalization could find room for a humanitarian vision, which would see countries as neighbours rather than as business partners. The international community could only be considered successful when globalization benefited people such as the rural women struggling in Honduras.

26. **Ms. Bethel** (Bahamas) said that the international community must not allow itself to be diverted from the still-urgent task of full gender equality, given its inextricable link to development. The message that gender equality was itself a development strategy needed to be uttered as often as possible, particularly in the developing countries, where daunting obstacles hindered women's empowerment.

27. To that end, the world must recognize women's right to the highest standard of physical and mental health. Their persistent lack of access to quality health, rising maternal mortality and morbidity, and the effect of HIV/AIDS and other diseases were daunting challenges indeed. The rise in non-communicable diseases and their disproportionately high impact on women and girls also deserved increased attention. Accordingly, the Ministry of Health had redoubled its efforts to foster healthy lifestyles and sound nutrition. The Bahamas had also supported the call for a high-level meeting on non-communicable diseases in September 2011.

28. With regard to economic obstacles to equality, gender pay gaps persisted and the current economic and financial crises threatened to reverse any economic gains made by women over the years. The Bahamas had amended its labour and inheritance legislation to ensure equal treatment for women, and was reviewing national legislation with a view to removing the final barriers to women's equal treatment in all walks of life.

29. The international community could not afford to ignore the underlying inequalities within the international economic system, which complicated efforts to implement gender-sensitive economic and development strategies. Those inequalities included developing countries' lack of equitable market access, crippling debt burdens and structural-adjustment programmes, as well as their exclusion from international economic decision-making, all factors that made it more difficult for them to realize their chosen development strategies and meet internationally agreed development goals.

30. **Mr. Gutiérrez** (Peru) said that the Council's draft ministerial declaration was significant in that it outlined the pending tasks to ensure gender equality and women's empowerment. The economic and food crises had placed particularly heavy burdens on rural women, and measures that supported their empowerment were key to overcoming poverty and marginalization.

31. Peru's response to the world crises had included financial measures to bolster employment and the promotion of women's participation in infrastructure projects. It had also been incorporating a gender perspective into its national development strategies.

32. Peru was very close to meeting the goal of halving the number of people living in extreme poverty, and had substantially reduced the overall poverty level. Primary education was nearly universal, and the illiteracy rate had been reduced to about 6 per cent by 2008. Equal access to education for women was nearly universal, although some gaps still remained in rural areas. A national programme had been launched to eliminate gender discrimination in education by 2021. It included culturally sensitive measures to enable girls living in extreme poverty to access educational opportunities.

33. In the area of maternal health, a goal often identified as lagging, Peru was seeking to close the gap in maternal mortality between rural and urban areas through the provision of skilled care during childbirth, and a new national plan focused increased attention on maternal and infant health, in particular for the poorest sectors.

34. Peru had a strong legislative framework to support the elimination of discrimination against women. It included a law on equal opportunities, as well as mandatory adoption within all Government agencies of anti-discriminatory practices. Eliminating violence against women was also a national priority, backed by a legal framework and a national programme to address domestic and sexual violence. A newly launched national strategy on violence against women was designed to build on lessons learned from previous initiatives, in collaboration with civil society. The Government was also seeking to raise awareness of sexual harassment in the workplace and was implementing policies on that issue within all its agencies.

35. Disparity in employment and earnings was another area of concern. Peruvian women earned only two thirds of what men earned, owing to their lack of

access to certain types of employment and their additional burden of household labour. The Government was establishing community childcare centres to lighten their burden.

36. As achieving gender equality greatly depended on effective public spending, the Government was promoting the integration of a gender perspective into both its national and municipal budgets. Member States could benefit from sharing their experiences in the pursuit of more equitable societies, and he hoped that the new gender entity established by the General Assembly — UN Women — would support that activity.

37. **Mr. Čekulois** (Observer for Lithuania), speaking on behalf of the Community of Democracies, said that the Community wished to reaffirm women's role as agents of development and recognize the efforts of many countries to advance women's rights. Women's empowerment was key to economic recovery and to building durable democracies.

38. Women were often the first victims of world challenges, including the international crises, natural disasters and climate change. The global economic and financial crisis should not become a pretext for neglecting efforts to combat discrimination against women, as their participation and creative potential was critical to decision-making. The Community would continue its advocacy against gender stereotypes, restrictions of women's roles and gender-based violence.

39. Insofar as gender equality was a crucial means of achieving the Millennium Development Goals, the Community was concerned about the uneven progress in implementating Goals 3 and 5. Governments were responsible for ensuring gender equality and women's participation through legislative and administrative measures, but must also implement existing legislation on gender equality, with no omissions or loopholes. The unique capacity of the United Nations to support Governments in those efforts would be enhanced by the new gender entity. The operationalization of that body without delay was therefore of great importance.

40. For its part, the Community had established a working group on gender equality and women's rights earlier in 2010, focused on developing women's leadership in public and private institutions; increasing their capacity to operate small and medium-sized businesses; and bolstering their participation in peace negotiations and other conflict-related discussions. The Community urged States to contribute to those activities.

41. **Mr. Argüello** (Argentina) said that gender equality, women's empowerment and the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action were essential to achieving the MDGs. Furthermore, his Government operated under the principle that women could not fully exercise their human rights until they were able to live free from violence. Argentina had therefore adopted a law to sanction and eradicate violence against women and had joined the Secretary-General's campaign to end that scourge.

42. Following its efforts to revitalize the economy after the national economic crisis of 2001, the Government had achieved steady growth over a number of years, and had succeeded in reducing the number of people living in poverty to well below 20 per cent of the population.

43. The Government, in line with Goal 3 on gender equality, planned to reduce the income gap between men and women; maintain gender parity in education levels, which had been reached in 2000; and increase women's leadership in both the private and public sectors. Women continued to earn less than men — despite their greater presence in higher education — generally owing to their additional burden of unpaid domestic work. Women leaders also remained a minority in the labour force, and the Government had taken several initiatives to increase women's economic power, including through a commission on equal opportunities. In terms of political leadership, however, as a result of the law on quotas enacted in 1991, over one third of the members of Parliament were women.

44. With regard to maternal health, abortion remained the primary cause of mortality, accounting for one quarter of maternal deaths. Accordingly, the Government was focusing on actions to prevent unwanted pregnancies; improve adolescent sexual health; screen for HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases; and empower women to make informed decisions about their reproductive health. In addition, a new law provided access to voluntary sterilization, and emergency contraception was a mandatory service provided by the Ministry of Health.

45. **Ms. Waffa-Ogoo** (Observer for the Gambia) said that the theme of the annual ministerial review was

particularly timely, given that negotiations on the operationalization of the new gender entity were nearly complete. Investment in women was essential to realizing the MDGs. The current global challenges, including the economic crisis and climate change, should not detract from the implementation of the Goals or risk a reversal of the modest achievements under the Beijing Platform for Action.

46. The Gambia was committed to attaining the goals of gender equality and women's empowerment set out in the various international agreements. The internationally agreed development goals served as its blueprints for development, including gender mainstreaming. The Gambia was formulating a gender strategy for the new decade. Women's participation in the formal and informal labour force was steadily improving. In education, gender parity was on track at the secondary level and had already been achieved at the basic level as a result of Government programmes to empower girls, with the support of non-governmental organizations.

47. In the area of health, reductions in maternal and child mortality had been achieved through the establishment of new health facilities, training of skilled birth attendants and free maternal-health care. In that regard, her delegation welcomed the commitments to strengthen maternal and child health made by development partners in the Muskoka Initiative. In terms of leadership, women had been appointed to many high-level posts in the public sector. However, the private sector remained severely lacking in women leaders, without a single woman heading a large enterprise in the country. The legislative framework necessary to achieving gender equality and women's empowerment had been enhanced through laws on children's rights and human trafficking. A comprehensive bill on the advancement of women was also being considered.

48. The implementation of the internationally agreed development goals was a matter of survival for the people of the Gambia. The central role of gender equality had been one of the critical lessons learned in the country's struggle to meet those goals. Yet an urgent need remained for sound and predictable global partnerships in order to deliver on the commitments. The economic and financial crisis should not be an excuse for developed countries to fail in their commitments on official development assistance, trade concessions and technology transfer. Major support by donors in agriculture, energy, finance and microcredit would go a long way towards achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women in the poorest countries. The most critical action for the attainment of gender equality was for the international community to deliver on its pledges.

49. **Mr. Cancela** (Uruguay) pointed out that the success of the forthcoming High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly on the Millennium Development Goals in September would demand a renewal of the collective commitment to development. The current multiple crises had highlighted the vulnerability and the urgency of certain problem areas, although the current situation was closely related to structural problems that were not new. The obstacles to market access, the changes in energy patterns and the need to move towards a sustainable economy must all be dealt with in order to guarantee long-term solutions and provide the developing countries with tools for economic and social development.

50. Uruguay reiterated its call for attention to be focused on how the internationally agreed commitments could be put into practice, since only in that way could the quality of life of all women be improved. To deal with gender-based discrimination, Uruguay had given the National Institute of Women the responsibility for promoting policies of equity by way of a plan for equality of opportunities and rights.

51. With regard to political participation, in addition to the approval of the law on quotas, actions had been taken to increase the visibility and impact of women politicians and to promote the inclusion of the gender issue in the parties' elections manifestos.

52. The Government had taken strict measures to combat domestic violence, but more work would be needed to strengthen programmes for prevention and early detection and for rehabilitation of victims and perpetrators.

53. Women were faced with higher rates of unemployment than men, and still encountered discrimination and wage inequality. Measures to improve women's work-related rights included the adoption of a law regulating domestic work and the incorporation of gender aspects into collective bargaining.

54. A national programme for women's health and gender included action in the sphere of sexual and

reproductive health, based on the recommendations from relevant international conferences. In addition, a National Commission was working to reduce deaths of women from childbirth. Uruguay had also submitted a draft resolution on smoking and maternal and infant health, and welcomed the support it had gathered.

55. Higher priority should be accorded to the implementation of the internationally agreed commitments for the advancement of women, and the international community should increase its cooperation to help the developing countries achieve those objectives.

56. **Mr. Sergeyev** (Ukraine) said that his country, like the European Union, considered gender equality as an essential component of development. The recommendations and conclusions in the Secretary-General's reports could be instrumental in achieving progress in that regard.

57. Ukraine had made considerable progress in implementing the outcome documents of the Beijing Conference and the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, as well as in achieving the MDGs. The country's authorities were working constantly to incorporate international strategies on gender into national programmes. Many important steps taken had been reflected in the combined sixth and seventh periodic report of Ukraine on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which had been considered in January 2010.

58. A priority of the Government's activities in the current year had been to maintain living standards while seeking to minimize the impact of the crisis, especially on the most vulnerable. A number of measures in the sphere of employment, social support to pregnant women and maternity payments had been introduced. The Government had also taken steps to improve the targeting of social benefits and to assist vulnerable citizens, particularly women and girls with disabilities, orphans and girls living in State care institutions.

59. Despite progress, there was still much to be done. Ukraine considered it of the highest priority to increase the representation of women at senior legislative and executive levels. The main obstacle to achieving gender equality being violence against women, the Ministry for Family, Youth and Sports had run a successful "Stop violence" campaign.

60. Ukraine was concerned about the sexual exploitation and trafficking in human beings that had become a serious problem for many States. It had taken a number of legislative measures to contribute to international and regional cooperation against human trafficking, which was a regional and global phenomenon that could not be dealt with effectively at the national level only. Ukraine stood ready to further enhance cooperation against that scourge and called upon all relevant United Nations bodies to consider appropriate ways of rendering assistance.

61. **Mr. Christian** (Ghana) observed that the agenda for women's empowerment as enshrined in the Beijing Platform for Action affected what happened in the home, in the workplace and in the wider national and international communities. He stressed the need for women to work together and in partnership with men towards achieving the common goal of gender equality everywhere.

62. Ghana had a long-standing commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment and had made major efforts to alleviate the twelve critical areas of concern under the Beijing Platform for Action. Additionally, the MDGs had been mainstreamed into the country's development policy framework and its poverty-reduction strategies, and guidelines had been developed for all departments on incorporating a gender perspective into their policies.

63. Ghana had enacted a number of laws to empower women, including those criminalizing sexual offences and harmful traditional practices as well as those prohibiting domestic violence and human trafficking. The Government was currently working on a spousal property bill. Policies had also been designed to empower women economically, through training and skills development, capacity-building, supply of appropriate equipment and sharing of information. Some rural women's groups had been provided with agricultural processing equipment while girls who had dropped out of school had been trained in alternative livelihood skills.

64. Gender disparity in primary and secondary education was likely to be eliminated by 2015. The establishment of a girls' education unit within the Ministry of Education, coupled with a range of other educational measures, had all contributed immensely to improved enrolment and attendance. Ghana was now

close to achieving gender parity in school enrolment at the basic level.

65. The results of women's empowerment were gradually being felt in diverse ways; especially in decision-making. Currently, the Speaker of Parliament, the Chief Justice and the Attorney-General were all women. The Government intended to mobilize more resources to assist women aspiring to district-level elections.

66. However, despite some progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of women, more efforts would be required to achieve all the Goals by the year 2015. Ghana faced enormous challenges in the areas of child and maternal mortality. It was also a concern that women's participation in Parliament had not moved beyond 11 per cent, and indeed had dropped in the 2008 elections.

67. **Mr. Heller** (Observer for Mexico) said he agreed with the Secretary-General that gender equality and empowerment of women and girls were essential to achieving all the MDGs. Despite all the efforts of the international community pursuant to the four specialized conferences, women continued to face various obstacles to the full exercise of their rights and the attainment of gender equality and empowerment.

68. An integrated approach was needed to combat all forms of discrimination and violence directed at women and girls. In particular, the aggravated discrimination against women with disabilities and indigenous or migrant women must be addressed in the interests of a truly equitable and inclusive society. The communications media and the schools needed to take an active part in emphasizing the critical contribution of men and boys to the achievement of gender equality.

69. Mexico's national body for the advancement of women had greatly increased its expenditure in its efforts to promote improved health and nutrition for women and to increase and lengthen female school attendance. In addition, laws had been adopted on equality and on the right of women to live free from violence. However, despite some progress, there was still much to do to achieve complete equality for women in society. Mexico considered that national efforts had to be reinforced by the actions of the international community.

70. Mexico looked forward to the functioning of UN Women, the new gender entity. Its broad mandate and the leadership that it would have to take on to mainstream gender throughout the United Nations system would give a new impetus to such an important topic. The key to the entity's success would be for it to build on the experience and the excellent work of existing institutions for the advancement of women. Civil society and non-governmental organizations had always been in the vanguard in matters of gender equality and promotion of the rights of women. Mexico was sure that they would become a strategic partner of the new entity and that the dialogue and collaboration between Governments and civil society would thereby be strengthened.

71. **Mr. Apakan** (Turkey) observed that, only five years away from the target date for the achievement of the MDGs, the world was suffering from multiple crises. The developing countries, particularly the least developed countries and countries suffering from conflict, were facing an even more daunting challenge as the hard-won progress on some of the MDGs was under threat. Therefore, the High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly in September would be critical in addressing the current gaps and challenges and determining the right policy responses to accelerate progress. National leaders must send a clear political message across the globe that the MDGs were achievable with the right policies, adequate investment and reliable international support.

72. In that context, Turkey considered that the Secretary-General's latest report on development cooperation (E/2010/93) gave a thorough analysis of the current situation and made accurate recommendations for future action. Today, the parameters of international development cooperation were changing as new actors became more active in formulating and implementing development policies at the national, regional and international levels. Emerging donor countries had acquired a unique position, and South-South cooperation had become a major form of technical cooperation among developing countries.

73. Against that background, Turkey believed that a renewed partnership — enhanced by increased official development assistance from developed countries, the comparative advantage of emerging donors and the best practices of developing countries — would work to the benefit of the developing world, in particular the least developed countries. However, while scaled-up and predictable assistance was critical, alone it was not

sufficient to generate and sustain balanced growth and development. Better-targeted aid which responded to country-specific needs and challenges, reinforced by national ownership on the part of recipient countries, was more likely to generate robust growth and development. For that reason, renewed global partnership was even more important, since official development assistance must be complemented by private capital flows, including foreign direct investment and microfinance.

74. An effective and better-coordinated United Nations system with an integrated development agenda would facilitate the formulation and implementation of development strategies. Turkey would continue to contribute to efforts to enhance the efficiency, accountability and credibility of the United Nations.

75. With regard to the advancement of women, considerable progress had been achieved worldwide. Laws protecting them from discrimination had been introduced, commitments had been voiced by States to repeal discriminatory laws and practices, and more women were taking their place in the social, economic and political fabric of society. There was also greater acknowledgment of the inextricable link between women's security and international peace and security. In that regard, a number of Security Council resolutions, which Turkey had strongly supported, had underlined the importance of empowering women as a key element in sustaining international peace.

76. However, much still needed to be done. Stubborn disparities persisted between males and females, and gender equality and women's rights were not adequately integrated into all the MDGs. There was a need to voice the message more strongly that, without the same opportunities and rights for women and men, whether in education, health, social affairs or the economy, none of the targets the world had set itself in those Goals could be fulfilled.

77. **Mr. Hassen** (Observer for Ethiopia) said that, in spite of the progress made since the Beijing Conference, women and girls constituted the majority of the world's poor, women's access to full employment and decent work was proving very difficult to implement in many parts of the world, and discrimination and violence against women and girls persisted in many countries.

78. In general, Ethiopia was encouraged by the trend towards gender parity in primary- and secondary-school enrolment as well as the progress in women's access to tertiary education. However, in sub-Saharan Africa, girls' participation in secondary education remained low. In addition, girls living in poverty, in rural areas or in urban slums or girls with disabilities faced additional difficulties in accessing formal education.

79. Ethiopia was also strongly concerned regarding the uneven progress in improving women's health. Every minute of every day, one woman died from reproductive health problems, while another 30 suffered long-lasting injury or illness from preventable pregnancy-related causes. Ethiopia expressed its full support for the Secretary-General's call for a global effort on women's health and called upon all development partners to lend their support to the Joint Action Plan for Women's and Children's Health.

80. The Government had taken a number of measures to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. It had promulgated a national policy on women and taken various steps to mainstream the gender dimension in all development programmes. In order to promote equal opportunities for women in decision-making, significant advocacy activities had been carried out across the country. As a result, the presence of women in political leadership had increased significantly, and constituted one fifth of all members of Parliament.

81. The Government was seeking to guarantee equality of female participation in all education and training programmes. As a result, enrolment of girls in primary, secondary and tertiary education had reached 45, 35 and 22 per cent respectively of the rates for boys.

82. The legal and policy framework for the protection of women's reproductive rights had shown immense improvements over the past fifteen years. Recently, the Government had launched a campaign to promote safe motherhood. In addition, tremendous efforts had been made to combat the HIV/AIDS pandemic and other infectious diseases affecting women.

83. Several legislative measures had been undertaken to curb discrimination and violence against women. The law had been revised to enable women to enjoy equal rights of inheritance, divorce and custody of children, and the Penal Code had been revised to

stipulate severe penalties for various forms of violence against women, including rape and abduction. Additionally, legislation had been put into effect to allow women's access to land, credit facilities and other productive resources.

84. **Mr. Mikec** (Observer for Croatia) said that his country's national policy for the promotion of gender equality served as the key policy framework for the empowerment of women. Its provisions were derived from a solid foundation of established national and international law, with strategic direction provided by the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Important progress had been made in key areas, including greater public awareness of women's political, economic and social rights, scaled-up anti-discrimination legislation, campaigns for the elimination of gender-based violence and increasing political representation of women, as well as strengthened collaboration between the Government and non-governmental organizations. Those were all vital achievements, upon which Croatia intended to further build as it drafted its second national policy.

85. Today, Croatia had a female Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister and Deputy Speaker, and women constituted 25 per cent of the Croatian Parliament. Efforts to ensure the full and equal participation of women in political and economic decision-making were showing steady progress.

86. Gender issues were being addressed through an enhanced legal framework. It prohibited discrimination on the grounds of sex, marital or family status or sexual orientation, especially in the areas of employment and education, ensuring equal opportunities for women in all aspects of Croatian society. Furthermore, in recognition of the crucial role non-governmental organizations played in the gender arena, legislation was in place to enable them to represent and counsel citizens before civil and administrative courts in discrimination cases. Additionally, there was a national strategy for protection against domestic violence.

87. Croatia was pursuing a national plan for the promotion of employment, while a women's entrepreneurship development strategy made an important contribution to the nurturing of women-led enterprises.

88. Croatia had had considerable success in terms of access to education for women and girls, with a continuing increase in numbers of female students, representing over half of all higher-education students. Furthermore, specific gender studies had been incorporated into the curricula of Croatian universities.

89. In placing gender issues high on its national agenda, Croatia also expected that such issues would remain high on the international agenda. Attainment of the gender-related MDGs would be of vital importance to consistent and sustainable progress in gender equality and empowerment. In order to ensure that the 2015 deadline would be met, a concrete strategy with a clear gender perspective had to be the outcome of the High-level Plenary Meeting in September. The necessary political will must be harnessed for countries to recommit themselves to the full achievement of all the MDGs, especially those gender-related Goals currently most at risk of not being achieved.

90. **Mr. Benítez Versón** (Observer for Cuba) noted that the current world crises were having a devastating impact on the countries of the third world and especially on women, who suffered multiple forms of discrimination and violence, including wars and conflicts, foreign occupation, the imposition of blockades and unilateral measures, labour exploitation, inequalities and social exclusion.

91. Despite the cruel and illegal blockade unilaterally imposed by the United States against Cuba for more than half a century, Cuba had met the legitimate aspirations of its women. But the blockade, condemned for many years by the General Assembly, remained the principal obstacle to any further progress in that regard.

92. Cuba had been the first country to sign the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. It had a national action plan for follow-up to the Beijing Conference; the plan had already been revised twice and would be revised again in the current year.

93. Cuba had made important advances in gender equality and women's empowerment. Cuban women occupied important spaces in various sectors of society. Women accounted for nearly half of national civil servants, two thirds of university graduates and over half of all judges. Female representation in Parliament had surpassed 40 per cent, putting Cuba in fourth position worldwide in that respect. However, further

work was needed to eliminate sexist stereotypes in society and the family.

94. Sexual and reproductive rights including the right to abortion were guaranteed as part of the free and universal health services. Work was continuing with a view to eliminating gender disparities in education. School enrolment was close to parity, while female students predominated at university level. There were two educational television channels with specialized programmes for girls and boys, which reinforced a non-sexist education and demonstrated cultural patterns that promoted equality between men and women.

95. The call made in Beijing and the commitment to contribute 0.7 per cent of gross domestic income of the developed countries as official development assistance remained an unfinished task, to the shame of those who had turned their backs on the just expectations of the countries needing assistance.

96. **Mr. García González** (Observer for El Salvador) said that his country was committed to an unceasing search for improvements in the quality of women's lives, especially through reduction of poverty and decreasing maternal and infant mortality.

97. In El Salvador there was parity between the sexes in primary education, and a preponderance of females at all higher levels. However, adult illiteracy continued to be a problem affecting women more than men.

98. In the area of technical training, changes had been made with a view to facilitating women's rise to managerial and administrative posts in public and Government service. Nevertheless, women continued to experience less favourable conditions in factory and domestic work. New initiatives would, however, bring domestic workers into the social-security system.

99. El Salvador recognized that there were still challenges to be overcome. Gender equality and empowerment constituted a framework for action that would enable the country to advance in the elimination of violence against women, to promote decent work, to increase the political participation of women, to eliminate trafficking and to protect the human rights of migrant women.

100. The Government intended to pursue those objectives by means of three major undertakings. The first was to make equality of rights between men and women a policy of the State; the second was to formalize the State's capacity to comply with all the internationally agreed commitments for the advancement of women; and the third was to strengthen the national mechanism to that end.

101. The national policy on women, implemented by the Institute for Women's Development, called for shared responsibility in the division of domestic tasks. The budget of the Institute had been increased by one third. In addition, at the local level the Institute was developing equal-opportunity plans for the design, implementation and evaluation of local-government measures. The Institute had carried out various activities aimed at preventing domestic violence, mistreatment of children and sexual abuse. With respect to HIV/AIDS, the Government had intensified its efforts to achieve universal access to programmes of prevention, treatment and care by 2015 and to ensure that those efforts contributed to equality between the sexes.

102. **Mr. Kleib** (Observer for Indonesia) noted that the 2015 deadline to achieve the MDGs was rapidly approaching and it was time for an evaluation. Despite encouraging signs of improvement, further action was needed in terms of economic participation, political empowerment, educational attainment and promotion of women's health and well-being. Critical challenges included poverty and its uneven impact on women. An approach coupling poverty reduction with equitable wealth creation was needed. Women had shown themselves to be successful producers and generators of wealth but the increasing global feminization of labour restricted their job opportunities and encouraged the violation of their rights; job opportunities with social protection needed to be improved. In addition, partnerships in reproductive health and planning were essential to decreasing pregnancy-related deaths.

103. Indonesia was on track to attain the gender equality and women empowerment Goals by 2015. Equal numbers of girls and boys were enrolling in and finishing school at all levels. Women also played an increasing role in politics and as agents of change. However, further transformation of the educational asset of women into economic and political participation was needed. Since women still constituted the majority of the poor, empowering women economically was fundamental. Moreover, Indonesia was striving to reduce maternal mortality substantially by 2015. It looked forward to the establishment of the

new United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women).

104. **Mr. Shin** Kak-soo (Republic of Korea) said that his country had learned from experience that gender equality and investment in women had a direct impact on national development. The economic role of women needed to be expanded with better access to credit and microcredit, banking and financial services. For its part, the Republic of Korea had introduced an effective support programme that targeted female heads of households who were the sole breadwinners.

105. With respect to improving women's health and lowering maternal mortality, the Republic of Korea welcomed the Muskoka Initiative of the Group of Eight countries, through which over $7 billion had been raised to support the achievement of Goals 4 and 5 over the next five years. It also welcomed the efforts of the Secretary-General in preparing the Joint Action Plan for Women's and Children's Health to be launched in September 2010. Thus, the international community took the issue seriously and had the political will to achieve those Goals by 2015.

106. The full and equal participation of women in political and economic decision-making made a significant difference, including in conflict, post-conflict and emergency situations. As providers of services necessary to their families, women best understood the real needs, shortages and problems faced.

107. The Republic of Korea, through affirmative-action plans, had markedly increased women's participation in political and economic affairs over the preceding decade. He hoped that other countries would consider similar initiatives.

108. He reminded the international community of the need to do more to eradicate violence against women. Women and girls were more vulnerable to domestic violence and sexual assault during times of hardship, making gender-based violence against women in conflict, post-conflict and post-crisis situations a priority issue.

109. The Republic of Korea was confident that the United Nations capacity on women's issues was going to be greatly expanded with the establishment of the new gender entity, UN Women.

110. **Archbishop Migliore** (Observer for the Holy See) noted that, ever since world leaders had committed their Governments to the ambitious Millennium Development Goals, some remarkable progress had been achieved in mainstreaming women's perspectives in development, in both multilateral and national policies. Even those countries lagging behind in development were giving more prominence to the role of women in public life, especially in the political arena.

111. The empowerment of women presupposed universal human dignity and, thus, complementarity between man and woman, which meant equality in diversity, based on biological data, expressed traditionally by male and female sexuality and on the primacy of the person. It also had to do with functions to be performed in society. In that regard, equality was not sameness, and difference was not inequality.

112. Empowerment of women for development also meant recognition of the gifts and talents of every woman and was affirmed through the provision of better health care, education and equal opportunities. It also meant honouring their capacity to devote themselves to society and to the family through motherhood. Altruism, dedication and service to others were healthy and contributed to personal dignity. If domesticity could be considered a particular gift of mothers in cultivating a genuine intrapersonal relationship in the family and society, then family-friendly working arrangements, shared family-care leave and redistribution of the burden of unpaid work would be given the attention they deserved.

113. The Holy See noted with concern that inequalities between individuals and between countries continued to grow and exploitation of women and girls persisted. That must be addressed by the provision of adequate social-protection measures appropriate to national contexts. In the health sector there was a need to eliminate inequalities between men and women and increase the capacity of women to care for themselves, principally by their being afforded adequate health care. Real advancement of women would not be achieved by concentrating on a particular health issue to the neglect of others but by promoting their overall health, which necessarily included giving greater attention to diseases specific to women.

114. Women's economic empowerment was essential for the economic development of the family and of society. Access to land and property, credit and financial services would help ensure their economic

stability, and their household and the community as a whole must support their entrepreneurship.

115. Violence against women, especially in the home and workplace, was a growing concern. Through adequate legal frameworks and national policies, perpetrators of violence must be brought to justice and women must be afforded rehabilitation.

116. The Holy See supported the initiatives in favour of the rights of women migrants and refugees and of women with disabilities. Human-rights awareness campaigns, especially for girls and women, must be promoted from early schooldays onwards and also through non-formal education. The more the dignity of women was protected and promoted, the more the family, the community and society would truly be fostered.

*The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.*



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